

SOFTWARE

PREVIEW

CorelDRAW Graphics Suite X4

Corel used to be a big name in graphics design, but in recent years Adobe has overtaken the company with products such as Illustrator. Now under new management, Corel's Graphics Suite X4 is an exciting product and next month we'll be taking an in-depth look at whether it's superior to Illustrator.

Apart from a new user interface that's cleaner and less cluttered, Corel has improved the handling of templates, tracing, text, layers and tables.

You also get Photo-Paint into the bargain, which is Corel's bitmap editor. This supports Photoshop's PSD format, Adobe colour management and RAW files. Again, we'll find out whether it's a serious challenger to the latest version of Adobe's Photoshop.

Jim Martin

Deputy Editor



jim@computershopper.co.uk

AVANQUEST Driver Genius Professional 2007

★★★★★

£20 inc VAT

From www.driver-soft.com

Driver Genius Professional 2007 is a driver-management tool that aims to take the graft out of keeping your PC or laptop up to date. Windows XP and Vista include a staggering array of device drivers to make it compatible with the largest possible range of hardware. Furthermore, when you buy a new peripheral, there's usually a CD containing the driver among the chaff of papers and accessory cables. Drivers can have a substantial impact on hardware performance, particularly for graphics cards, and should be updated throughout a product's lifetime. The drivers included with Windows or shipped with the device are usually outdated.

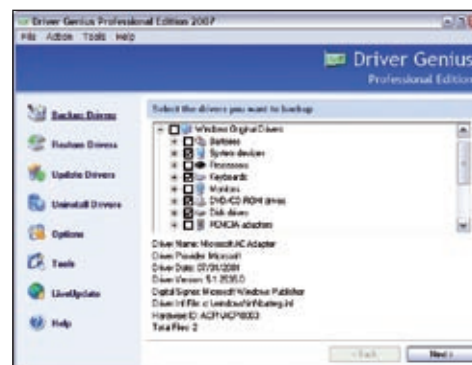
Ensuring you have the latest device drivers for all your hardware is a time-consuming process, but this is made simple by Driver Genius Professional. Once you've activated the driver update tool, you simply select your operating system. The program then checks the version numbers of your installed drivers against those most recently available and prompts you to download new drivers where it finds a discrepancy. This means that although you don't have to do the

SUMMARY

- ✓ Can lead to better performance
- ✓ Saves you time finding drivers
- ✗ A luxury, not a necessity

SYSTEM-MANAGEMENT UTILITY

Requires Windows 98/98 SE/Me/2000/XP/Server 2003/Vista/XP x64/Server 2003 x64/Vista x64, 64MB RAM, 10MB disk space, internet connection
PRODUCT CODE B000V155YC
DETAILS www.avanquest.com/uk



▲ The simple layout of Driver Genius means you never get lost in tabs and menus

looking, you still have complete control over what Driver Genius downloads and installs.

A handy driver backup tool is provided, which locates all your drivers and stores them in a Zip file, a self-extracting archive or an auto-install file or simply bundles them into a location of your choice. Having your drivers in this form is useful if you want to

reinstall your system from scratch, but it could also save your bacon if a driver becomes corrupt or an updated version results in instability. An additional diagnostic tool helps you identify problem drivers.

Driver Genius does its job well, is easy to use and provides more than just a driver update facility. It's good value and undoubtedly useful, but it's still a luxury and not a necessity.

David McKinnon

BABYLON Babylon 7

★

£46 inc VAT

From www.babylon.com

Babylon is an online dictionary and translation program. It provides translation in 75 languages, currency and measurement conversions and access to published dictionaries and public glossaries such as Wikipedia. It can auto-complete words and check spelling in email, instant messaging and blogs.

Translation and dictionary services are freely available online, but Babylon can give you all this information, particularly linguistic translation, without you having to leave the application you're using. Just highlight text in any application, hold down the Ctrl key and then right-click for a translation to or from English.

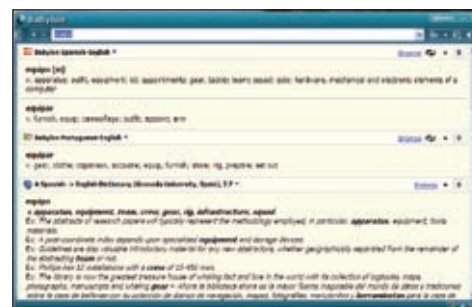
This reveals a small, non-intrusive popup window, along with dictionary definitions from each of the dictionaries you have installed. Many are free, but premium content, such as the Oxford Dictionary and Thesaurus, costs extra. You can change the colour and font in this window, but the translation section is often hard to find.

However, a far worse failing is the awful quality of Babylon's translation. In our tests, it translated text from a Spanish review of a USB flash drive as "owing to its dimensions it is difficult opening for connecting to the team".

SUMMARY

- ✗ Poor translation quality
- ✗ Limited offline usability
- ✗ Nagging adverts

TRANSLATION SOFTWARE Requires Windows 2000/XP/Vista, 128MB RAM, 50MB disk space, Internet Explorer 6 or later
DETAILS www.babylon.com



▲ Babylon's translations leave much to be desired

Google's free translator, meanwhile, interpreted the context and translated the text correctly.

Even more worrying is the Smart Dictionary, which enables translation between two languages that don't share a direct dictionary. It does this by translating into English and then into the desired final language. However, any poor translation into English from the source language is going to have an effect on the final language. If you need a reliable translation, you won't want to risk a Chinese whispers-style result.

We were also constantly nagged by adverts to buy premium content. Babylon might be more convenient and include more features than free online translators such as www.freetranslation.com, Babelfish or Google, but its results are no more reliable, and in some cases they are simply wrong. Based on these findings, Babylon 7 is one to avoid.

Lucy Martin

CYBERLINK DVD Suite Ultra 6

★★★★★

£65 inc VAT

From www.cyberlink.com

CyberLink is best known for PowerDVD, but its range of products is broader than you think. DVD Suite Ultra 6 combines most of these into one suite. These include PowerDVD 7.3, PowerDirector 6.5, PowerProducer 4.2, Power2Go and PowerBackup 2.5.

The focus is on HD video, so PowerDVD 7.3 BD/HD plays Blu-ray discs as well as any H.264, MPEG2 and WMV high-definition content. It supports hardware acceleration, which means compatible graphics cards can be used to help decode HD video. We'd recommend a dual-core processor and an Nvidia GeForce 7600GT or an ATI Radeon X1900 XT or later for watching Blu-ray movies.

PowerDirector 6.5 HE lets you edit HD video in every format, including AVCHD and HDV. It will also import VOB and DVR-MS files. It's relatively basic, but the simple layout is ideal for novices who want automatic correction for shaky video or movie creation where clips are trimmed, transitions inserted and titles added.

When you want to output your movie, PowerProducer 4.2 (BD/HD) allows you to create Blu-ray discs complete with menus, and you can also burn Blu-ray content to

standard DVDs, making it more economical. If you have an HDV or DV camcorder, you can record your movie back to tape. Alternatively, PowerProducer will create H.264, MPEG2 and WMV-HD files, and there's full support for 5.1-channel Dolby Digital audio.

Power2Go is CyberLink's answer to Nero. It includes a Vista sidebar gadget for dragging and dropping files to discs. As well as audio CDs and DVDs, you can burn data to Blu-ray discs; single- and dual-layer discs are supported. You can also password-protect specific files or folders as well as encrypt the data. Another handy addition is the ability to create and burn ISO files.

PowerBackup 2.5 supports Blu-ray discs and you can choose from incremental or differential backups. Backups can be scheduled, compressed, password-protected and encrypted. PowerDVD copy is a separate application for disc-to-disc copying. It can backup non-CSS protected discs and can automatically shrink movies to fit on particular discs.

Other utilities let you burn directly to discs, create jewel case and disc labels and make photo slideshows with music. The suite is managed from the PowerStarter interface, which is neat and easy to navigate.

SUMMARY

- ✓ A comprehensive suite
- ✓ Inexpensive
- ✗ Two-channel DVD playback only

BURNING, EDITING AND PLAYBACK SOFTWARE Requires Windows XP/Vista, dual-core processor, 1GB RAM, 25GB disk space, CD/DVD/Blu-ray writer for disc burning
DETAILS www.cyberlink.com



▲ DVD suite includes 10 full applications

For £65, DVD Suite Ultra 6 is excellent value. If you don't need high-definition support, you can opt for the Pro version, which costs £40. This includes the same applications, but lacks the ability to burn, edit or play Blu-ray discs or H.264 files.

There are a couple of niggles with the Ultra version. Despite the name, it doesn't come with the Ultra versions of any of the applications. This means that PowerDVD supports only stereo sound unless you use the CLMEI-2 surround-sound emulation. The only alternative is to use an S/PDIF output and connect an external Dolby Digital decoder. PowerDirector 6.5 HE can't output to DivX, and the automatic music generator is missing.

DVD Suite Ultra 6 is still excellent value, especially if you have a set of speakers with a built-in Dolby Digital decoder. It's more expensive than Nero or Roxio's suites, though, so it's worth the premium only if you'll use the Blu-ray support.

Jim Martin

Also consider...

OPENOFFICE OpenOffice.org 2.1

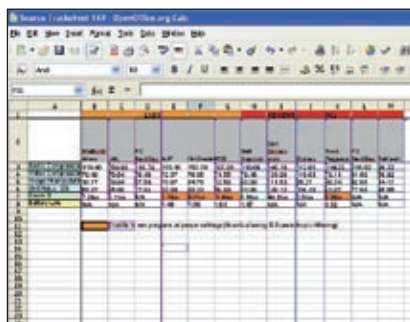
★★★★★

Free

From www.openoffice.orgCOMPUTER SHOPPER
BEST BUY

OpenOffice is a completely free office suite, and it's brilliant. It might feel a little old-fashioned next to Microsoft Office's flashy features, but it has a number of excellent applications including a word processor, spreadsheet, database and presentation program. It's an essential piece of software for any PC owner.

OFFICE SUITE Requires Windows 98 or later, Pentium processor, 128MB RAM, 800MB disk space
DETAILS www.openoffice.org
FULL REVIEW Sep 2007



ADOBE Creative Suite 3 Design Premium

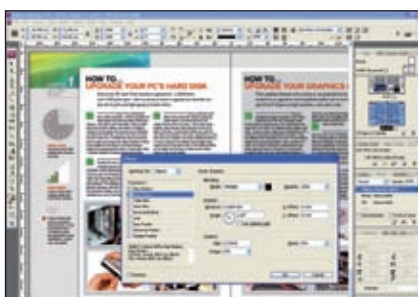
★★★★★

£1,576 inc VAT

From www.amazon.co.ukCOMPUTER SHOPPER
BEST BUY

Adobe's Creative Suite has quickly become the best bundle of creative software around. With its new Design Premium edition, it's got even better. The bundle includes InDesign, Photoshop Extended, Illustrator, Acrobat Professional, Flash Pro and Dreamweaver – everything you need, whether you're creating work for print or the web.

CREATIVE SOFTWARE Requires Windows XP SP2/Vista, 512MB RAM
PRODUCT CODE 29500009
DETAILS www.adobe.co.uk FULL REVIEW Aug 2007



GETDATA Recover My Files

★★★★★

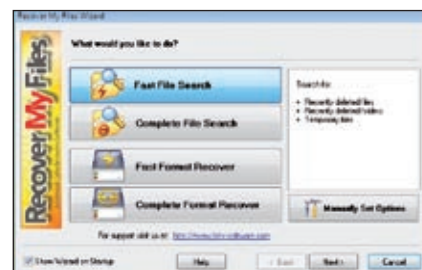
£33 inc VAT

From www.amazon.co.ukCOMPUTER SHOPPER
BEST BUY

Recover My Files is an invaluable program for anyone who has accidentally deleted files or folders. The program can even recover all the files from a fully formatted hard disk, or other media such as a USB flash drive, optical discs, tapes or memory cards.

It supports over 200 file types, including JPG, MP3, DOC, ZIP and MPG, plus obscure types such as saved games and internet favourites. Just make sure you have enough spare capacity on a second disk for the recovered files.

RECOVERY SOFTWARE Requires Windows 95 or later, 128MB RAM
DETAILS www.getdata.com
FULL REVIEW May 2008



MYOB Accounting 2008

★★★★★

£175 inc VAT

From www.myob.co.uk

MYOB is an accounting package for small businesses. The user interface is well designed and everything is controlled from a Command Centre window that has six main buttons. Clicking on each of these displays several options, organised into flowcharts to make it clear which tasks needs to be done first.

Entering transactions is straightforward. Paying a supplier, for example, involves writing an onscreen cheque. Displayed under the cheque are fields for categorising the purchase. MYOB lets you create new suppliers while filling out the cheque (rather than in a separate screen), but requires you either to remember a numeric code for each category or to pick the category from a pop-up dialog box. On the plus side, it remembers the last categories to be applied to a supplier. If a bill is typed in as unpaid, MYOB can remind you when it is due for payment. Companies sending out a lot of cheques can use the software to print directly on to special cheques.

Invoicing customers is a clear-cut process. There are fields for the salesperson's name, the delivery method to be used and a special message to the customer. There's a new spellchecker, and invoices

can be batched ready for printing later on. A good invoice designer is provided, and MYOB can now show onscreen previews of invoices and other forms. To save money and time, invoices can be sent by email.

The software handles credit terms admirably, letting you choose the credit-worthiness of customers, set credit limits, give discounts for early payment and charge interest for late payment. Contact with customers can be logged and MYOB can track follow-up dates.

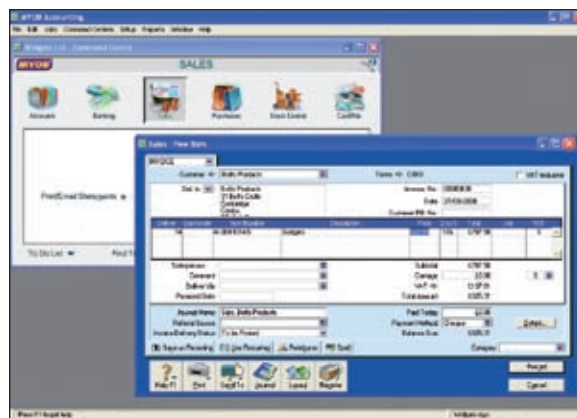
Reports can be exported as webpages or to Microsoft Excel. Helpfully, contacts can be synchronised with Outlook and mailing labels can be created within the software. You can also send data to an accountant by email or on a disc.

MYOB handles VAT well, whether the normal accrual VAT scheme or the VAT cash accounting scheme. At the end of a VAT quarter, the program will display and print a VAT return that can be transcribed for HM Revenue & Customs. However, there's no facility for online submission, unlike Sage Instant Accounts (see page 62).

SUMMARY

- ✓ Correcting mistakes is easy
- ✓ Built-in stock module
- ✗ Lacks online VAT returns

ACCOUNTING SOFTWARE Requires Windows 2000/XP/Vista, 200MHz processor, 64MB RAM, 235MB disk space
DETAILS www.myob.co.uk



▲ Creating a new invoice is straightforward, just like a paper form

The built-in stock module integrates well into the invoicing and purchasing modules. A Count Stock option lets you make manual adjustments after a stock take.

Correcting mistakes has been made simple. Everything entered into MYOB is listed in a transaction journal that relates to the type of transaction (for example, purchases and sales journals). In each of these journals, clicking on an arrow to the side of each entry shows the original invoice, credit note and other information; these can then be altered directly.

MYOB Accounting is an excellent package for small businesses wanting to track their accounts. Like its main rival QuickBooks, it's easy to use but is less cluttered and more intuitive. Businesses needing a computerised payroll should consider the MYOB Accounting & MYOB Payroll bundle, which costs around £300.

Alex Singleton

Also consider...

ROXIO Easy Media Creator Suite 10

★★★★★

£40 inc VAT

From www.kikatek.com

COMPUTER SHOPPER
BEST BUY

This suite comes with almost all the media-editing tools you'll ever need. Its greatest strengths are its tight integration between all the modules and its friendly, task-oriented interface. With the recent drop in price, it's now even better value and it's the best media suite you can buy.

VIDEO-EDITING SOFTWARE Requires Windows XP or Vista, 500MHz processor, 128MB RAM (1.6GHz, 512MB for Vista), 3.2Gb disk space PRODUCT CODE 048068411
DETAILS www.roxio.co.uk FULL REVIEW Jan 2008



KASPERSKY Internet Security 7.0

★★★★★

£43 inc VAT

From www.kaspersky.com

COMPUTER SHOPPER
BEST BUY

With a clear interface and superb anti-virus protection, the latest version of Kaspersky's Internet Security is great value. It deflected every web exploit we threw at it, and its firewall is so discreet we had to double-check it was running. There's excellent spam filtering, instant messaging integration and various tools for cleaning up after an infection. Watch for special deals on Kaspersky's website if you don't want to spend this much.

INTERNET SECURITY SUITE Requires Windows 2000/XP/Vista, 800MHz processor, 512MB RAM, 50MB disk space
DETAILS www.kaspersky.com FULL REVIEW Mar 2008



RS AUDIALS Radiotracker 4.0 Platinum

★★★★★

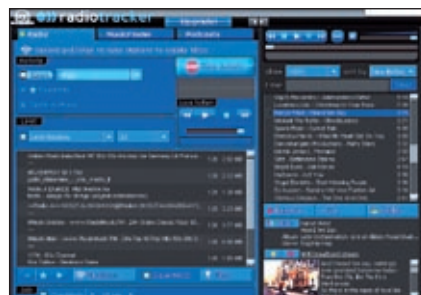
£21 inc VAT

From <http://shop.audials.com>

COMPUTER SHOPPER
BEST BUY

Do you want to build your music collection for just £21? Radiotracker lets you legally record automatically from internet radio stations. Just choose from a variety of genres, or enter specific artists or tracks. Radiotracker will then ensure that, when they are played, they are transformed into MP3s on your hard disk, complete with ID3 tags.

MP3 DOWNLOAD SOFTWARE Requires Windows Me or later, hard disk space for tracks PRODUCT CODE 300099362
DETAILS <http://radiotracker.com> FULL REVIEW Mar 2008





▲ Dealing with customers in Sage Instant Accounts can be time-consuming

SAGE Instant Accounts 14

★★

£135 inc VAT

From www.sage.co.uk

Sage Instant Accounts is aimed at very small businesses. It creates quotations, invoices and end-of-year accounts. With version 14, VAT returns can be sent electronically to HM Revenue & Customs. It also produces a comprehensive range of reports that can be sent directly to Microsoft Office.

A practice mode lets you try out the features so you needn't worry about messing up your real accounts. The user interface can be tedious at times, involving more stages to complete tasks than other programs.

The most significant addition to version 14 is Payment Solutions, an integrated way for businesses to process credit and debit card payments made over the phone or by post and, once processed, have them automatically appear in the accounts. This costs £10 a month for up to 300 transactions a quarter. However, the service does not integrate with the web; you may find that PayPal is a better approach.

Correcting mistakes has often been a problem in accounting software. In Instant Accounts, mistakes can be corrected but only through a corrections module. This is a pity; it ought to be as simple as correcting a spreadsheet or document. After all, for the small businesses at which Instant Accounts is aimed, needing to track down alterations made by rogue employees is unlikely to be a problem.

Sage Instant Accounts is a competent product. However, Sage's expertise lies in producing accounting software for larger businesses. Its attempt to cater for the small business owner fails because it's not easy enough to use, especially as many will turn to the package only once a quarter to produce a VAT return. MYOB BusinessBasics (see MYOB Accounting 2008 review on page 60) is easier to use yet costs less than half the price, making it impossible to recommend Instant Accounts.

Alex Singleton

SUMMARY

- ✓ Electronic VAT returns
- ✗ Difficult to correct mistakes
- ✗ Less intuitive than other products

ACCOUNTING SOFTWARE Requires Windows 2000/2003/XP/Vista, 1GHz processor, 512MB RAM, 400MB disk space PRODUCT CODE 013604RT DETAILS www.sage.co.uk



▲ The dashboard view shows your computer's health at a glance

IOLO System Mechanic 7

★★★

£25 inc VAT

From www.iolo.com

System Mechanic is a tool that helps you find and solve problems that could be causing your PC to run slowly or exposing it to security risks. The dashboard gives you an overview of your system's health and security; a deep analysis on the first run flags any potential threats or problems. This scan effectively identifies problems, but tends to exaggerate their seriousness, making it difficult to distinguish between serious problems and minor niggles.

Solutions to the problems are also cloaked in mystery. Where you expect a range of possible actions, 'Repair' is the only option. While novice users may appreciate System Mechanic's tendency to simplify things, more experienced users will be frustrated at the level to which this has been taken.

A range of tasks can be scheduled to perform regular housekeeping, such as removing temporary files and spyware infections. Again, the task descriptions are vague. The Power Tools also include options to Accelerate, Repair, Clean and Secure your computer without indulging in detailed explanations.

Despite attempts to distance users from the nuts and bolts of system upkeep, System Mechanic does, if you delve deep enough, provide a wealth of customisable tools to manipulate your computer. There are 34 tools to streamline the process of fine-tuning your computer, covering everything from spyware to memory allocation. One tool that will be appreciated by novices and experts alike is SafetyNet, which allows you to undo or delete the changes System Mechanic suggested, returning your system to a previous state.

Although System Mechanic can increase your computer's performance and identify potential threats, its black-box approach and over-cooked warnings of problems will leave experienced users perplexed and novice users none the wiser.

David McKinnon

SUMMARY

- ✓ Easy to use
- ✓ A wealth of tools
- ✗ Customisable tools are hidden away

SYSTEM-MANAGEMENT UTILITY Requires Windows 2000/XP/Vista, 400MHz processor, 256MB RAM, 30MB disk space, Internet Explorer 6 or later PRODUCT CODE B000MQ706A DETAILS www.iolo.com

FREE SOFTWARE

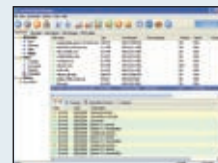
Free Download Manager 2.5

★★★★★

From www.freedownloadmanager.org

Free Download Manager can increase your download speeds as it splits files into sections and downloads them simultaneously. Downloads can be paused and resumed (where the originator supports resume) and files can be downloaded from HTTP, FTP and BitTorrent sites.

FDM comes with a brilliant Free Upload Manager that lets you upload files directly from Windows Explorer and even provides free hosting online. Make sure you opt out of the New Software Informer if you don't want this additional updating tool.



CPU-Z 1.42

★★★★★

From www.cpuid.com/cpuz.php



CPU-Z is a utility for gathering system information and doesn't need to be installed. It provides in-depth details about your PC's or laptop's processor, motherboard, memory and operating system. It reports the frequency your processor is running at, its current multiplier and core voltage.

CPU-Z can also tell you the current timings of your memory modules, their individual capacities and serial numbers.



IrfanView 4.1

★★★★★

From www.irfanview.com



IrfanView is a fast, compact and comprehensive image viewer supporting well over 100 formats. It's capable of basic image editing, creating slideshows and even playing MP4, MOV, AVI and WMV video files. It can bundle images into an EXE file, creating an easily portable slideshow, and it can also turn an image collection into a Windows screensaver.

The program can control TWAIN drivers for scanners and other imaging devices, helping you to scan lots of images at once.

